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Advancement of women

Letter dated 2 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a summary of the World Assembly for Women, held in Tokyo on 28 and 29 August 2015 (see annex).

This year, the World Assembly for Women gathered about 150 leading figures in the field of women's issues, especially in gender equality and women's empowerment, from Japan and around the world, with 41 countries and eight international organizations represented.

Among the participants were five senior officials of the United Nations, namely, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Helen Clark, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Irina Bokova, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 29 (a).

(*Signed*) Motohide **Yoshikawa**
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Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 2 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Summary by the Chair on the basis of the proposals and ideas of participants in the World Assembly for Women, Tokyo 2015

Work-life management and engaging men in reforms

Change long working hours

Concrete proposals

- Review existing laws and frameworks in order to identify current obstacles and potential solutions for the future.
- Work to implement measures, introduce new systems and collect relevant evidence so that both men and women can understand that work-life management is a major part of economic growth and that long working hours have many disadvantages for both societies and companies.
- Central Governments, local governments and the public sector should work together to promote working-style reforms, while simultaneously supporting women's education and career development in order to realize the reformation of men's perceptions at home and at work.
- Implement merit-based pay systems, clarify job descriptions for each person and clarify companies' operating process reforms that lead to improved productivity, new business creation and innovation.

Leaders introduce change and expand the network for women's empowerment

Concrete proposals

- Leaders create the mentalities and cultures in their organizations. Leaders shall actively promote mentality change in their organizations.
- Acknowledge that the commitment of executives is important to promoting women's empowerment.
- Male leaders who have already been involved in promoting the active participation of women shall assemble, share best practices, expand their networks and continue their ongoing communication.

Promote education to develop abilities

Concrete proposals

- Promote education that develops each child's ability so that they are not limited by stereotypes from primary education.
- Teach the importance of men and women supporting the family and society together.
- Popularize the mentality that it is "cool" for both men and women to participate in raising children.

Design new and flexible working styles utilizing information and communications technology

Concrete proposals

- Design the working environment to consider generational differences in values regarding work-life balance.
- Reform the culture by promoting working styles that utilize information and communications technology that can remove restrictions on work location.
- In order to increase men's participation in this movement, call attention to the fact that, apart from being important in and of itself, women's empowerment leads to higher productivity in society and has a strong influence on the economy.
- Gain additional perspectives to find new working styles by actively sharing examples and information between regions and countries, rather than relying solely on local information.

Implement diversity in organizations leading to innovation

Concrete proposals

- Emphasize that this movement is not just about promoting women's empowerment; it will also provide organizations with a chance to innovate.
- Continue efforts to minimize the gender wage gap by overcoming the gender gap in promotion rates, reducing the number of women who leave permanent positions during child-raising years and removing the gendered division of labour.
- Companies shall strive to realize working environments in which a diversity of members can actively participate, understanding that these efforts lead to business solutions. Central and local governments shall encourage these movements.

Further support for women entrepreneurs across Asia

Concrete proposals

- Create curricula in educational institutions to develop entrepreneurship, fostering the mentality that, if there are no positions that one would like to pursue, one can create a job by oneself.
- Create an environment in which women can undertake new challenges without being overly cautious or hesitant to take risks owing to considerations of work-life balance.
- Support women entrepreneurs by fostering a culture that respects people who challenge themselves even after failing.

Women who are facing challenges

Promote the active utilization and enhancement of support systems

Concrete proposals

- Create a society to thoughtfully support single mothers and women who are facing maternity harassment and actively endeavour to solve the issues facing them.
- Create a mechanism by which women who are facing challenges can consistently receive the necessary services related to raising children and/or working.
- Utilize social networking sites and encourage women to raise and share their issues.

Reinforce actions to support single mothers

Concrete proposals

- Reinforce and maintain an environment in which single mothers can apply their abilities and continuously participate in the labour market without living in poverty.
- Recognize that the development of childcare infrastructure and welfare systems, such as childcare allowances, plays an important role. Prevent future generations from inheriting the current challenges faced by mothers by promoting one-stop support services, providing job assistance, such as introducing role models, and creating working environments that make raising children easier, such as by providing children's rooms in offices and allowing women to come to the office with children.

Girls and education

Enable all girls to complete equal and high-quality education at the primary and secondary levels

Concrete proposals

- Work to enable all girls to complete primary and secondary education, recognizing that there are social customs, such as child marriage, early pregnancy and childbearing, child labour, prejudice and violence, that prevent girls' access to equal and high-quality education.
- Improve the school environment, such as by constructing schools within a reasonable distance from where children reside, ensuring safe roads and building toilets for girls, so that girls can feel safe going to school.
- Develop and utilize highly professional female teachers.

Public and private sectors should enhance necessary resources

Concrete proposals

- Governments and other sectors, including private and international organizations, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, and families shall collaborate in order to accelerate the improvement of educational quality and environment.
- Expand scholarship programmes for students, including girls and women of high scholastic standing.

Overcome social images and increase the number of female students in the natural sciences

Concrete proposals

- Enhance mentorship programmes and support female students in the natural sciences in primary and secondary educational institutions.
- Realize the economic independence of women by increasing the number of female students in the natural sciences in higher education.
- Overcome negative social images that suggest that the natural sciences are just for men or that girls are weak in those areas.
- Promote networking among women who are active in the natural sciences.

Peacebuilding and women

Promote the active participation of women in peacebuilding processes

Concrete proposals

- Enhance quantitative and qualitative data collection and the use of such data relating to women's participation in peacebuilding processes.
- Promote women's proactive participation in peacekeeping activities, conflict prevention activities and activities related to maintaining order.
- Create action plans and provide guidelines based on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

Promote the participation of women in the countries and regions concerned

Concrete proposals

- Acknowledge the contribution of women who understand the needs of their areas the most and promote their participation in the peacebuilding and recovery processes of their countries and regions.
- Publicize local-level information to the Government and the world.

Enhance the restoration of women's rights and women's empowerment in recovery processes

Concrete proposals

- Post-conflict economic recovery is important. Implement measures appropriate to the local situation by utilizing regional women's organizations and non-governmental organizations.
- The private sector shall collaborate to activate the regional economy and inspire entrepreneurship.

Mobilize women's leadership in disaster risk reduction

Concrete proposals

- Improve the environment to allow for men and women of diverse generations to participate in order to mobilize women's leadership in every decision-making process about disaster risk reduction.
- Men and women shall brainstorm together to consider concrete measures for implementing in the field.
- Consider the whole disaster cycle, from prevention to recovery, from the viewpoint of both men and women of diverse backgrounds and from different regions.
- Introduce the broad interests of a diversity of people, including youth, into disaster risk reduction activities and work to apply their abilities.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships for international cooperation

Build plans, budgets and data that respect women

Concrete proposals

- Promote collective actions involving academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and philanthropic bodies that exceed companies' existing activities, such as activities in cooperation with the United Nations Global Compact and the Centre for Social Research.
- Women's leadership, especially at the regional level, is the key to the success of multi-stakeholder partnerships. Each stakeholder, both the receiver and the provider of assistance, shall study, discuss and cooperate equally.
- Create rules for international cooperation among multi-stakeholder partnerships.
- Actively use technology, such as mobile banking and cell phones.

Empower women through adequate sanitation

Concrete proposals

- Widely acknowledge that there are 2.5 billion people who do not have easy access to hygienic sanitation facilities and that 1 billion people are still practising open defecation on a daily basis.

- Overcome issues related to the lack of sanitation facilities, such as women facing increased levels of sexual violence and girls facing barriers to educational opportunities owing to a lack of girls' sanitation facilities at school, as well as other sanitation problems, such as the spread of infection.
- Support activities for improving sanitation in developing countries. For example, there has been success in increasing girls' attendance at primary schools by installing sanitation facilities for girls.
- Share, across borders, knowledge on the role that sanitation facilities play in leading to women's safety, empowerment and improvement of quality of life.

What youth can do to realize the society that they envisage

Promote open discussion and take actions based on one's own values

Concrete proposals

- Take actions based on one's own values without succumbing to social pressure to conform or being limited by stereotypes.
- Through open discussion and youth collaboration, break down stereotypes to create environments in which diversity is accepted and societies in which one can keep striving without fear of failure.
- Create environments in which more people have access to information and to other people, and increase opportunities for youth to communicate their viewpoints and ideas.